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As to Europe, I am not with you. Out here in the West the social game doesn't require us to lick any English boots. There seems to us to be two sides to the big quarrel—both of them bad. Belgium, of course, was innocent, France too civilized, too intelligent to seek war. But among the rest of the fighting lunatics, is there any real choice? When it comes to envy, greed, contempt of neutral's rights, and general super-cussedness, aren't they all tarred with the same stick?

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FREDERIC HARRISON AND ROGER BACON

SIR,—I have read with much interest the article on Roger Bacon by Frederic Harrison in your August number, but regret to note that it is not altogether free from a misconception as to Roger Bacon's relation to his own age and to his ecclesiastical Superiors. Most modern scholars have long since discarded the false Renaissance tradition as to the general darkness of the mediæval period properly so called. It is very difficult, therefore, to understand how Dr. Harrison, unquestionably learned as he is, can refer to Bacon (p. 246) as "surrounded by the gross superstitions and conventions of the Dark Ages." Roger Bacon lived in the thirteenth century, and Renan was doubtless accurate in calling that century "the greatest century of the Middle Ages." It was a time of rapid and unmistakable progress in almost every line of human endeavor. It is an error, then, to suppose that Roger Bacon lived in an age of general ignorance and superstition, but it is still more erroneous to suppose that he stood alone in his lifetime as though his was a solitary voice proclaiming vainly the principles of modern enlightenment in a night otherwise devoid of critical experimental knowledge. The real fact is that Bacon was but one of a galaxy of geniuses who, "by his superior realization of the importance of positive studies and experimental research added his own special contribution to the achievements of the age, though, even in this department, he had others to share his glory." Indeed, we shall rightly appreciate Bacon only as we gain a closer acquaintance with the three men whom he acknowledged as his masters in learning—Bishop Grossteste, Adam Marsh and Peter de Maricourt—and whose knowledge and method he absorbed and more fully developed.

Dr. Harrison's assertion (p. 243) that "in 1278 when Bacon was about sixty-four he was condemned for heresy and imprisoned," has no foundation whatever in the first-hand authorities. Apart from this consideration, it is to be remembered that Bacon had proved his orthodoxy before this period by the *Epistola de Nullitate Magiae*. So far as concerns Bacon's extant works, there is no error regarding matters of faith in any of these writings, which Bacon certainly submitted with all willingness to the judgment of the Church. His purpose, as Dr. Bridges has shown, was to institute under papal authority a school of scientific and progressive culture that should enable the West to hold its own against the East and thus promote the work of the Church in civilizing and evangelizing mankind. We should wholly misconceive Bacon, therefore, if we supposed that his language on this matter was a veil beneath which heterodox speculation might be allowed to pass. He was not merely orthodox in the common acceptance of the word, but intensely Catholic. It cannot be denied, however, that

some of his statements regarding his contemporaries are rash, inaccurate, and unjust, and marred by personalities, which would have aroused animosity against him just as much had they been written at the present day.

There are other indications in Dr. Harrison's article that he is not so well informed as he might be concerning his subject; as, for example, where he declares (p. 243) that Bacon "about his thirtieth year took the degree of Doctor of Theology," and his description of him (p. 250) as "one of the noblest divines in the central and characteristic age of the Catholic Church." It may be mentioned here that Bacon never became a Doctor of Theology, and it is doubtful whether he was ever in holy orders.

Another statement of Dr. Harrison (p. 243) to the effect that the successor of Pope Clement IV. "was appointed for three years" is not less misleading. It is a matter of history that the death of Clement IV., which occurred 29 Nov., 1268, left the Papal Chair vacant until 1 Sept., 1271, when the Cardinals elected Gregory X., who reigned until 10 Jan., 1276.

Again, those who are at all familiar with the history of mediæval philosophy will surely be surprised to hear St. Bonaventure classed by Dr. Harrison (p. 248) amongst Churchmen "who cared little for philosophy." Whatever may be thought of his attitude towards Bacon, Bonaventure was without doubt one of the greatest philosophers of the Middle Ages. It is true that no work of his is exclusively philosophical, but in his commentary on the *Sentences*, his *Breviloquium*, his *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* and his *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, he deals with the most important and difficult questions of philosophy in such a way that these four works taken together contain the elements of a complete system of philosophy, and at the same time bear striking witness to the mutual interpenetration of philosophy and theology, which is a distinguishing mark of the Scholastic period.

Certain it is, moreover, that at least one of the arguments advanced in the well-known letter beginning *Innominato Magistro*, written by Bonaventure when he was lecturing at Paris between 1248 and 1257,—that, namely, in favor of studying Philosophy in general ("for without practical knowledge of other sciences the Holy Scriptures cannot be understood"),—would have appealed to Bacon, whether or not he was the "unnamed Master" to whom the letter in question was addressed.

It is a mistake to suppose that Bacon's writings were almost forgotten for centuries, as Dr. Harrison avers (p. 250); or that his influence was negligible after his death. The extant manuscripts of Bacon's works show that he never wanted admirers, and that his works exerted a continuous influence. For the rest, Dr. Harrison, in recognizing the genius of Bacon, has fallen into the further error of overlooking his importance as a Schoolman and of exaggerating his importance as a man of science.

I refer those of your readers who may be interested in the subject to the volume of *Essays on Roger Bacon* by different authors published last year on the occasion of the Oxford celebrations to commemorate the seventh centenary of his birth (Oxford University Press, 1914).

Might I venture to add that the study of these *Essays* is much to be recommended as a corrective to limited views and one-sided enthusiasm about the personality and work of Roger Bacon?

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